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Ricci Has Only Nice Things to Say About 'Legend' Co-Star

"He is the kindest, most generous, thoughtful man, and chivalrous in ways I didn't expect." So says the girl of the moment, **Christina Ricci**, about her "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" co-star, **Johnny Depp**.

Ricci, a Golden Globe nominee for her dazzling performance in "The Opposite of Sex," is in London working with Depp and director **Tim Burton** on a reworking of the old headless horseman tale. Ricci plays Katrina Van Tassel, the richest girl in town. (Christina and I both agreed this sounds more like the name of a stripper. Ricci said, "Actually, it's a good drag queen name, too!") Depp plays Ichabod Crane, come to town to investigate a murder. Even though Depp and Burton have worked together before, most famously on "Edward Scissorhands," Ricci says she doesn't feel like the odd person out and praises Burton as "a great filmmaker ... and he *loves* making movies. He's very stimulating."

GOSSIP

Liz Smith

Ricci first gained notice in "The Addams Family" movie, as the spooky child Wednesday. She has developed into a miniature sex bomb, voluptuous and precocious. And still a bit spooky. But her role in the outrageously not-politically correct "The Opposite of Sex" was the apogee of this progression from child to vixen. She says, "No more sex roles, no more teen nymphos. I want to do very dramatic things, lots of screaming and crying, being incredibly unhappy." Comedy doesn't seem to appeal to Christina!

Right now, she is worrying over what to wear to the Golden Globes. "I mean, we all have to walk the red carpet and encounter **Joan Rivers**, don't we?"

Indeed! Some celebs would rather walk the plank than face the acid-tongued Rivers on these gala nights. But the E! channel — which puts Joan out there dishing the stars in their couture — just loves her.

■ Their fans will go wild! **Julie Andrews** and **James Garner** are together again in Montreal, where they are making "A Winter Visitor" for a "CBS Sunday Night Movie." (We probably won't see this until late in the year, maybe around Christmas.)

Andrews and Garner starred together in "The Americanization of Emily" and "Victor/Victoria," and they are said to be thrilled at this reunion.

In spite of her recent troubles — trumpeted in the supermarket tabloids and other places — Julie is "looking gorgeous," according to her producer, the positive-minded **Gary Pudney**. He is an exec on this, along with **James Green** and **Alan Epstein**. **Roger Young** is directing, and the screenplay is by **Phil Silvers'** daughter **Nancy**.

Is Andrews still a great big star? You bet. **Barbara Walters** is up there right now taping an interview. I guess Julie will tell Barbara the truth behind the rumors.

■ Do reviews matter? Not if the public really wants to see something. **Robin Williams'** "Patch Adams" was roundly trashed by most major critics. The movie is now on its way to a potential $200 million world gross. Universal, a studio that seemed to be on the brink of disaster only a month ago, is so happy with the results of this unabashedly sentimental movie that it'll donate half a million dollars toward the building of the real Dr. **Patch Adams'** dream hospital — the Gesundheit Institute.

Universal also has another winner

Christina Ricci
Comedy roles have little appeal

Johnny Depp
Plays Ichabod Crane

Tim Burton
Reworking headless horseman tale

coming, "October Sky," set in a coal-mining town circa 1957. Getting ready to blast out into stardom is young **Jake Gyllenhaal**. He plays "October Sky's" protagonist, a boy not content with his predetermined life, struggling to free himself from what is "expected." The cast members are young and attractive, and, blessedly, they do not spend their screen time being hacked to death by men with hooks for hands or having gratuitous sex. This is a teen film that is *about* something. Most inspiring.

■ Showtime has optioned investigative reporter **Gus Russo**'s mammoth new book, "Live by the Sword: The Secret War Against Castro and the Death of JFK." It will be made into a two-hour miniseries. The book, from up-and-coming Bancroft Press, delves deeply and convincingly into the events leading up to and after the assassination of **John F. Kennedy**. Russo's work is a whydunit rather than a whodunit. He believes **Lee Harvey Oswald** was the lone shooter, but his motives and the ensuing coverup are what he really digs into. This subject is always fascinating, and Russo's new information and new spin make for a good read.

■ **Ralph Ginzburg** has a terrific book coming out in March. Titled "I Shot New York," this is a day-by-day chronicle of city life for an entire year. **George Plimpton** wrote the foreword to this photographic journey, declaring it "a classic." Other worthies who have seen the book before publication and commented favorably are filmmaker **Ken Burns**, **Pete Hamill**, Cardinal **John O'Connor** and **Hugh Hefner**.

Some might remember Ginzburg as the founder of the short-lived, legendary Eros magazine back in the early '60s, as well as Moneysworth, a consumer advisory publication, and Avant Garde, which devoted itself to the arts and politics. Ginzburg has always been an iconoclast and a firebrand for freedom of expression. In fact, he spent several years in jail because of Eros, which offered sophisticated erotica.

Now we know he is also a terrific photographer, making the ordinary sights of Manhattan extraordinary.

■ **Ben Affleck** pumps! The handsome actor and Oscar winner recently split from his honey, **Gwyneth Paltrow**. But he's not pining away. Au contraire. He just ordered a new assortment of weights and a bench pad from the Gym Source, delivered to his New York digs. He's in fine shape now, but he wants to add some strength to his 6-foot-2, 185-pound bod. Guys need their strength while courting Gwyneth, and even more afterward.

NEWSDAY

Pat Steger is on vacation. Her column, The Scene, will return Wednesday.